

# Yellowstone National Park Trip Planner

# 2012

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## Explore Yellowstone safely

... by avoiding surprise encounters with wildlife. In areas with low visibility, make good use of your human voice. Talk, sing songs, share stories, or jokes, anything you can sustain comfortably while walking to let animals know you're sharing an area.



# 1 Explore Yellowstone safely

## Welcome

Most visitors come to see and experience wild animals and hydrothermal features. Enjoy and make the most of these opportunities.

## Stay on boardwalks

You must stay on boardwalks and designated trails around hydrothermal features. Delicate formations and crust surrounding them is thin and breaks easily, and often overlies scalding water. Visitors have died in them.

- Toxic gases exist at dangerous levels in some areas. If you feel sick, leave immediately.
- Pets are prohibited in hydrothermal areas.
- Swimming is prohibited where water flows entirely from a hydrothermal spring or pool. Where allowed, swim at your own risk. The water can harbor agents of fatal meningitis and Legionnaires' disease.



NPS / PEACO

Keep your children next to you and make sure they understand park hazards, especially hydrothermal areas, wildlife, and steep drop-offs.



25 yards (23 m)



100 yards (91 m)

**Keep your distance.** Federal regulation requires you to stay at least 100 yards (91 m) away from bears and wolves, and at least 25 yards (23 m) away from all other wild animals, such as bison, elk, bighorn sheep, deer, moose, and coyotes.

## Do not approach wildlife

If any wild animal changes its behavior due to your presence, you are too close. Do not approach wildlife, no matter how tame or calm they may appear to you in the moment. Always obey instructions from park staff on scene.

Big as they are, bison can sprint three times faster than humans can run. No vacation picture is worth personal injury. Your best view may be from inside a hard-sided vehicle.

Do not feed, or allow any animal to obtain a food reward from you. It is unhealthy, and it can lead to aggressive behavior and roadside accidents.

Close human contact can be highly stressful to wildlife, forcing them to risk injury and to squander reserves for other life purposes, such as reproduction, nurturing of offspring, and winter survival.



NPS / SCHMIDT

Elk can be unexpectedly aggressive. Keep your distance.

## Do not run from a bear

Visitors are required to keep all food and garbage stored in a bear-proof manner. When viewing bears along roads, use pullouts and stay in your car.

When hiking, stay in groups of three or more people. Make noise in areas where you can't see far around you. Be alert for bear sign, such as fresh tracks or scat. Never approach an animal carcass.

Carry bear spray and take time to learn how to use it safely and effectively.

- If you have a surprise encounter with a bear, **do not run**. Slowly back away.
- If a bear charges, stand your ground and use your bear spray. It has been highly successful at stopping aggressive behavior in bears.

- If a bear charges and makes contact with you, fall to the ground onto your stomach and "play dead."

Report all bear encounters and wildlife incidents to a park ranger immediately.

To learn more, please visit – [www.nps.gov/yell/planyourvisit/bearenc.htm](http://www.nps.gov/yell/planyourvisit/bearenc.htm)

## 2 Highlights



Lower Falls of the Yellowstone River

NPS / KELLER

**History** People have been visiting and living in the Yellowstone area for thousands of years. The park was established in 1872. Visit Mammoth Hot Springs to walk the self-guiding trail around Fort Yellowstone, which chronicles the U.S. Army's role in protecting the park. Other historic sites include the Norris Geyser Basin Museum, the Museum of the National Park Ranger, Obsidian Cliff, and the Old Faithful Inn and Historic District.

### Grand Canyon of the Yellowstone

This spectacular canyon, including Upper and Lower Falls of the Yellowstone River, can be seen from the overlooks and trails of the Canyon Village area, and from the Tower Fall and Calcite Springs overlooks south of Tower Junction.

**Geysers and Hot Springs** Geysers, hot springs, mudpots, and fumaroles are evidence of ongoing volcanic activity.

To see them, visit Mammoth Hot Springs, Norris Geyser Basin, Fountain Paint Pot and Firehole Lake Drive, Midway Geyser Basin, the Old Faithful area, West Thumb Geyser Basin, and Mud Volcano.

**Lake Area** Yellowstone Lake is North America's largest high-altitude lake. The area is prime habitat for many birds and mammals. You can also enjoy boating, fishing, hiking, and viewing hydrothermal features.

**Wildlife** You can see a variety and abundance of wildlife unparalleled in the lower 48 states. All the large mammals present when Yellowstone became a park are here today: grizzly and black bears, wolves, mountain lions, elk, bison, pronghorn, moose, and bighorn sheep. You'll also see a variety of birds, including bald eagles. Check visitor centers for best viewing locations.

## Visitor Centers and Museums

These facilities are open late May to late September

### Fishing Bridge Visitor Center

Information, bookstore, and exhibits on birds, wildlife, and lake geology.

**Grant Visitor Center** Information, bookstore, exhibits, and video on fire in Yellowstone.

**Madison Information Station** Information and bookstore.

**Museum of the National Park Ranger, Norris** Exhibits at this historic soldier station on the history of the park ranger profession.

**Norris Geyser Basin Museum** Information, bookstore, and exhibits on the hydrothermal features of Yellowstone.

**West Thumb Information Station** Information and bookstore.

**Albright Visitor Center, Mammoth** Information, bookstore, exhibits on wildlife and history, and films on the national park idea, Yellowstone, and artist Thomas Moran. Open all year.

**West Yellowstone Visitor Information Center** Information and publications. Open late April–early November and winter.

**Canyon Visitor Education Center** Explore the world of Yellowstone's supervolcano, an idea that has captured the minds and imaginations of people around the world. You can see, hear, and learn how the Yellowstone volcano, its geysers and hot springs, and geologic history influence all life found here. Open May–early October.

### Old Faithful Visitor Education Center

Discover secrets of geysers and other hydrothermal wonders, and the fascinating story of life in extreme environments. The Old Faithful Visitor Education Center is one of the few national park visitor centers to achieve Gold certification for LEED (Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design). Open mid April–early November and winter, with access via guided snowcoach or snowmobile tours.



NPS / PEACOCK

# 3 Programs and tours

## Park ranger programs

Rangers lead activities and programs—from short walks to evening campfire programs—during the summer and winter seasons. Check visitor centers and the park newspaper for schedules. Rangers also rove through major park feature areas.

## Commercial services

There are concessioners, outfitters and professional guides that operate in the park. Authorized providers are listed at [www.nps.gov/yell/planyourvisit/services.htm](http://www.nps.gov/yell/planyourvisit/services.htm)

## Yellowstone Association

The park’s official educational partner offers wildlife watching tours, backpacking trips, and short courses. Most programs are based at the Lamar Valley field campus or park hotels.

The organization also offers a packaged-price Deluxe Trip Planner for \$29.95 that includes five books, guides, and references that cost \$41.30 if purchased separately.

Contact 406 848-2400, or visit [www.YellowstoneAssociation.org](http://www.YellowstoneAssociation.org)



NPS / PEACO

## Especially for children

The Junior Ranger and Young Scientist programs promote involvement in and understanding of Yellowstone. Ask about them at visitor centers or check resources on the park website [www.nps.gov/yell/forteachers/index.htm](http://www.nps.gov/yell/forteachers/index.htm)



NPS / PEACO

# Activities

**Bicycling** is allowed on public roads, parking areas, and designated routes. It is prohibited on boardwalks and backcountry trails. Wear safety gear, helmet, and high visibility clothing. Roads are narrow and winding with few shoulders. Elevations range 5,300 to 8,860 feet with long distances between services and facilities.

**Hiking** can take you far from roads and crowds. Avoid areas of dead trees (snags), which may suddenly fall, especially on windy days. Stream crossings require caution as high water persists well into summer. Check trail conditions at visitor centers or ranger stations

**Self-guiding trails** are available at Mammoth Hot Springs, Fort Yellowstone, Norris Geyser Basin, Fountain Paint Pot, Upper Geyser Basin, Grand Canyon of the Yellowstone, West Thumb Geyser Basin, and Mud Volcano.

**Stock use** depends on trail conditions. Coggins testing is required. Hay restrictions enforced. Contact the backcountry office for information. See “Regulations.”

**Swimming, bathing, and wading** are discouraged due to extremely cold water. They are illegal in hydrothermal features or streams flowing from hydrothermal features.

**Fishing** is allowed in certain areas and with permits.

**Boating** is allowed on most of Yellowstone Lake and on Lewis Lake. Only non-motorized boating is allowed on most other lakes and one river: the Lewis River between Lewis and Shoshone lakes. All boats and float tubes require permits.

**Drive the Grand Loop** Regardless of which park entrance you choose, you can drive a “figure eight” of interior roads that link you to many of the park’s major features. See “Map.”

Scan this QR code with a free app for your smartphone to link directly to trip-planning resources on the park website.

<http://go.nps.gov/visit-ynp>

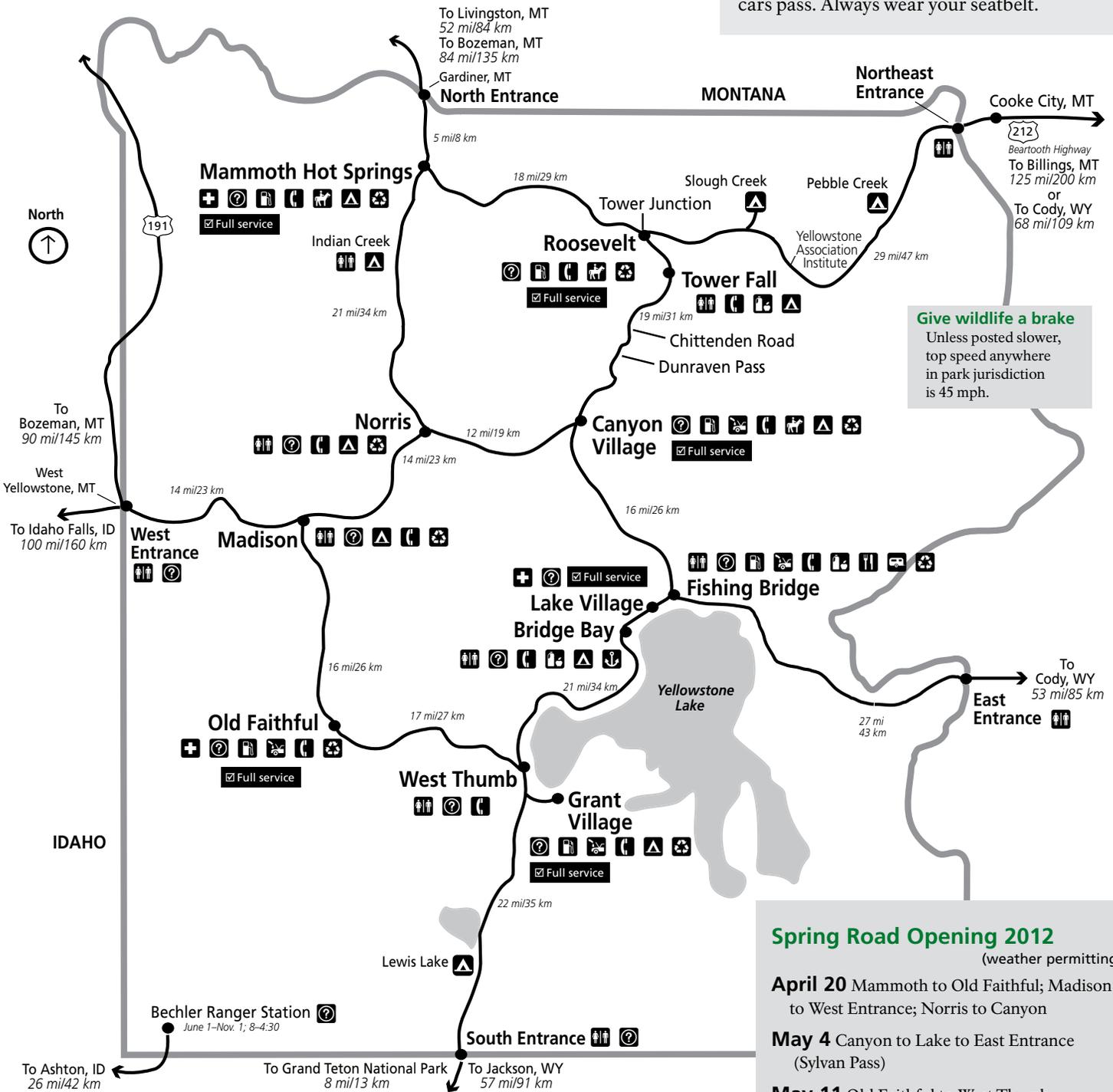
There is limited connectivity inside Yellowstone itself. The term QR code is a registered trademark of Denso Wave, Inc.



# 4 Map

Road construction schedules are subject to change. Check at visitor centers for updates.

**Traffic** Most roads are busy, narrow, and rough. Some are steep with sharp drop-offs. Watch for pedestrians, bicyclists, motorcyclists, wildlife, and road damage. Pull into turnouts to let other cars pass. Always wear your seatbelt.



**Give wildlife a brake**  
Unless posted slower, top speed anywhere in park jurisdiction is 45 mph.

## Spring Road Opening 2012 (weather permitting)

**April 20** Mammoth to Old Faithful; Madison to West Entrance; Norris to Canyon

**May 4** Canyon to Lake to East Entrance (Sylvan Pass)

**May 11** Old Faithful to West Thumb (Craig Pass), Lake to South Entrance, and Tower Junction to Tower Fall

**May 25** Tower Fall to Canyon (Dunraven Pass), Beartooth Highway

## Fall Road Closures 2012

**October 9** Beartooth Highway, Tower Fall to Canyon (Dunraven Pass)

**November 4** All park roads close at 8 AM except from the north entrance to Cooke City, which is open all year.

**Full service** = restroom, food service, general store, lodging

- |                                       |               |                                     |
|---------------------------------------|---------------|-------------------------------------|
| Clinic                                | Gasoline      | Horseback riding                    |
| Restrooms                             | Auto service  | Marina                              |
| Visitor center or information station | Phone         | Camping                             |
| Food service                          | General store | RV campground: Hardsided units only |
|                                       | Recycling     |                                     |

Cell phone service is limited.

# 5 Services

Dates and hours of operation vary and are subject to change.

## Yellowstone National Park

PO Box 168, Yellowstone, WY 82190  
 307 344-7381  
 307 344-2386 TTY  
 www.nps.gov/yell

	ATM	Auto/RV Repair	Backcountry Office	Boat Cruises	Bus Tours	Fishing Permits	Fuel	General Store/Grocery	Horseback Riding	Hotel/Lodge	Gift Shop	Marina	Public Laundry	Public Showers	Ranger Station	Restaurant/Cafeteria	Visitor Center
Bridge Bay			●	●	●	●	●		●			●			●		
Canyon	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●
Fishing Bridge	●	●		●	●	●	●		●				●	●	●	●	●
Grant Village	●	●	●	●	●	●	●		●	●	●		●	●	●	●	●
Lake Village	●			●	●	●	●		●	●	●		●			●	
Mammoth	●	●		●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●		●	●	●	●	●
Old Faithful	●	●	●	●	●	●	●		●	●	●		●	●	●	●	●
Roosevelt		●		●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●		●	●	●		
Tower Fall	●				●		●		●								

## Area National Parks

Grand Teton NP  
 307 739-3300  
 Glacier NP  
 406 888-7800

## Area National Forests

Shoshone  
 307 527-6241  
 Gallatin  
 406 587-6701  
 Bridger-Teton  
 307 739-5500  
 Caribou-Targhee  
 208 624-3151  
 Custer  
 406 657-6200

## Lodging and activities

307 344-7311, or 866 439-7375 toll free  
 307 344-5395 TTY  
 www.YellowstoneNationalParkLodges.com

## Yellowstone Association

Maps, books, classes  
 406 848-2400  
 www.YellowstoneAssociation.org

## Yellowstone Park Foundation

Official fundraising partner  
 406 586-6303  
 www.ypf.org

# Other Services

**Medical services** The park is on 911 emergency service. In summer, outpatient medical services are offered at Lake, Mammoth, and Old Faithful. Ambulances, 24-hour emergency service, laboratory, pharmacy, and radiology services are available. Mammoth Clinic is open year-round.

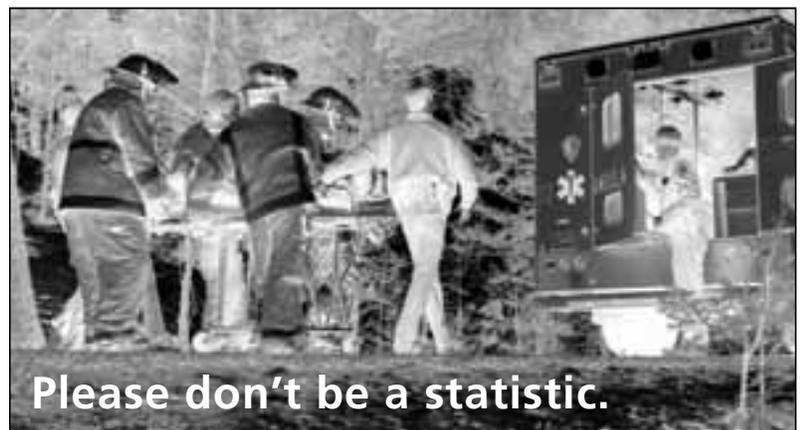
**Accessibility** Facilities judged to be negotiable for wheelchair users are described in a free guide, *Accessibility in Yellowstone*, available at entrance stations and visitor centers. Or contact: Park Accessibility Coordinator, PO Box 168, Yellowstone, WY 82190.

**Sign language interpreters** If you want a sign language interpreter for NPS interpretive programs, please call three weeks in advance 307 344-2251.

**Worship services** In summer, most major denominations and interdenominational services are available in the park and adjacent communities. Check at visitor centers.



**Limited cell phone service** may be available at Grant, Canyon, Mammoth Hot Springs, and Old Faithful.



**Please don't be a statistic.**

NPS PHOTO

- Observe posted speed limits and traffic signs
- Don't take risks while fishing, swimming, or crossing streams
- Stay on boardwalks and trails around hydrothermal features
- Keep a safe distance of at least 25 yards from all elk and bison

## Montana Chambers of Commerce

Big Sky 406 995-3000  
 Billings 406 245-4111  
 Bozeman 406 586-5421  
 Gardiner 406 848-7971  
 Livingston 406 222-0850  
 West Yellowstone 406 646-7701  
 Cooke City-Silver Gate 406 838-2495  
 Red Lodge 406 446-1718

## Wyoming Chambers of Commerce

Cody 307 587-2297  
 Jackson 307 733-3316  
 Dubois 307 455-2556  
 E. Yellowstone/Wapiti Valley 307 587-9595

## Idaho Chambers of Commerce

Idaho Falls 208 523-1010  
 Eastern Idaho Visitor Info 800 634-3246

**Emergency dial 911**

# 6 Regulations

**Bicycling** is allowed on public roads, parking areas, and designated routes. It is prohibited on boardwalks and backcountry trails.

**Boaters** must have a Coast Guard approved “wearable” personal flotation device for each person boating.

**Calling to attract wildlife** Bugling to elk, howling to wolves, calling to attract birds, etc., is illegal.

**Disturbing park features** Possessing, collecting, removing, defacing, or destroying any natural or archeological objects or plants, animals, or minerals is prohibited.

**Driving while intoxicated** or under the influence is illegal.

**Feeding animals** is against the law.

**Fires** are permitted only in designated campgrounds, in picnic areas with fire grates, and in some backcountry campsites.

**Fishing** requires permits. Hooks must be barbless. Tackle must be non-toxic. Leaded split-shot sinkers, soft lead-weighted ribbon, and other toxic tackle are not allowed.

**Food** must be attended at all times while not in storage. Never leave food outside your vehicle or around your campsite—not even inside a cooler—when you are away or asleep.

**Hay and stock feed** are allowed only if certified weed-free hay and processed feed. Hay must be baled and covered. Trailers must be clean and empty of manure, loose hay, or feed.

**Littering** is illegal, unsightly, destroys hydrothermal features, and injures wildlife.

**Motorcycles**, motor scooters, and motor bikes are not allowed off-road or on trails. Operators must carry a valid state driver’s license. Vehicles must display valid state plates.

**Pets** must be leashed. They are prohibited on any trails, in the backcountry, and in hydrothermal basins. Pets are not allowed more than 100 feet (30.5 m) from a road or parking area. Leaving a pet unattended and/or tied to an object is prohibited.

**Seat belts** must be worn by all occupants when a vehicle is in motion.

**Service animals** are allowed on trails and boardwalks in major areas. They require permits in the backcountry.

**Slow-moving vehicles** must pull over to let others pass. Never stop or pause in the middle of the road. Use pullouts.

**Speed limit** is 45 mph (73 kph) unless posted slower.

**Spotlighting** Viewing animals with artificial light is illegal.

**Transporting** water, fish, and any other aquatic plants or animals into the park’s waters is illegal.

**Weapons and firearms** Possessing or using weapons (air guns, bow and arrow, crossbows, blowguns, spears, slingshots, etc.) is prohibited. Firearms possession is allowed pursuant to applicable state and federal regulation. You are responsible for knowing and following all current firearms and weapons regulations for national parks, available at – [www.nps.gov/yell/parkmgmt/landsandpolicies.htm](http://www.nps.gov/yell/parkmgmt/landsandpolicies.htm)

## Permits

**Fishing season** generally begins the Saturday of Memorial Day weekend, usually the last weekend in May, and continues through the first Sunday of November. Fishing season opens later around Yellowstone Lake and between the lake and the Grand Canyon. Anglers 16 years or older require permits to fish in the park. No state license is required. Younger children can fish for free under certain conditions. Inquire at ranger stations, visitor centers, or general stores.

Regulations are posted at [www.nps.gov/yell/planyourvisit/fishing.htm](http://www.nps.gov/yell/planyourvisit/fishing.htm)

**Motorized boats** require permits.

Purchase at the South Entrance, Lewis Lake Campground, Grant Village backcountry office, and Bridge Bay Ranger Station.

**Non-motorized boats and float tubes** require permits. Purchase at the Old Faithful, Mammoth, and Canyon backcountry offices, Bechler Ranger

Station, West and Northeast entrances, and West Yellowstone Visitor Information Center.

**Overnight backcountry camping** requires a permit, free 48 hours or less in advance, or for a fee by mail beginning April 1. Service animals are allowed in the backcountry but must have permits. For more information, request a backcountry trip planner from the Backcountry Office, PO Box 168, Yellowstone, WY 82190.

## Entrance fees

Private, noncommercial automobile	\$25 (7 days both Yellowstone and Grand Teton)
Motorcycle	\$20 (7 days both parks)
Single entry (foot, bike, ski, etc.)	\$12 (7 days both parks)
Yellowstone-Grand Teton Pass	\$50 (valid one year from month of purchase)
America the Beautiful Pass, National Parks, and Federal Recreational Lands Pass	\$80 (valid for one year from month of purchase)
Senior Pass	\$10 for U.S. citizens or permanent residents of the U.S. who are age 62 or older
Access Pass	Free for citizens or permanent residents of the U.S. who have been determined permanently disabled and present such documentation

## The federal pass program

Several pass options are available for federal recreation sites—including national parks and wildlife refuges—where entrance fees are charged. Purchase at an entrance station or <http://store.usgs.gov/pass>

The Golden Age Passport and Golden Access Passport are still accepted here.

# 7 Camping

Fees and dates are subject to change. Find updates at [www.nps.gov/yell](http://www.nps.gov/yell)

	Dates	Fees	Sites	Elev (ft)	Features
Bridge Bay*	5/25–9/9	\$20	>425	7,800	A, F, DS, G
Canyon*	6/1–9/3	\$20	275	7,900	A, F, S/L, DS, G
Fishing Bridge RV**^	5/11–9/23	\$37	>325	7,800	F, S/L, DS, G, hookups
Grant Village*	6/21–9/23	\$20	425	7,800	A, F, S/L, DS, G
Madison*	5/4–10/21	\$20	>250	6,800	A, F, DS, G
Indian Creek	6/8–9/10	\$12	75	7,300	V
Lewis Lake	6/15–11/4	\$12	85	7,800	V
Mammoth	All year	\$14	85	6,200	A, F, G
Norris	5/18–9/24	\$14	>100	7,500	F, G
Pebble Creek	6/15–9/24	\$12	>27	6,900	V
Slough Creek	6/15–10/31	\$12	23	6,250	V
Tower Fall	5/18–9/24	\$12	32	6,600	V

\* Price does not include tax. Reserve sites with Xanterra Parks & Resorts 307 344-7311, toll-free 866 439-7375, or TTY 307 344-5395  
 ^ All sites have electricity.  
 Holders of Golden Age, Senior, Golden Access, and Access passes receive about 50% discount on camping fees, except at Fishing Bridge RV Park where no discounts apply.

A Accessible sites available  
 F Flush toilets  
 V Vault toilets  
 S/L Pay showers/laundry near  
 DS Dump station  
 G Generators OK 8 AM–8 PM

## How long can you camp?

14 days from July 1 to Labor Day (first Monday in September) and 30 days the rest of the year. No limit at Fishing Bridge.

## Group camping

Available at Madison, Grant, and Bridge Bay campgrounds for large groups with a designated leader, such as youth or educational groups. Price depends on size. Reservations required. Contact Xanterra Parks & Resorts, PO Box 165, Yellowstone, WY 82190, toll-free 866 439-7375.

## Attention RV drivers

Few campgrounds have sites for a combined vehicle length of more than 30 feet. Reservations recommended. Some communities near the park also have RV parks.

## Weather and seasonal access to the park

Yellowstone’s weather is unpredictable. Be prepared for changing temperatures, storms, and emergencies. Most of the park is above 7,500 feet (2,275 m). Allow yourself time to acclimate, and drink plenty of liquids. Visitors with cardiac or respiratory medical history should consult a physician before a visit.

**Spring** Cold and snow linger into June. Early in spring, daytime temperatures average in the 40s and 50s. By late May and June, they may reach the 60s and 70s. Nighttime lows fall below freezing. **Roads open by sections beginning the third Friday in April. Storms may cause restrictions or closures.**

**Summer** Daytime temperatures are usually in the 70s. Nights are generally cool, dropping into the 40s and 30s. June can be cool and rainy. July and August tend to be drier, although afternoon thunder showers are common. **Park roads are generally open, barring accidents, rock slides, or construction.**

**Autumn** Weather can be pleasant. Temperatures average 10–20 degrees lower than summer. Nighttime lows can fall into the teens and lower. Snow increases in frequency and intensity. **Storms may cause temporary closures or restrictions, such as chain or snow tire requirements. Park roads close on the first Monday of November, except the road from Gardiner to Cooke City, MT, which is open all year.**



NPS / GREENBURG

**Winter** Daytime temperatures range from near zero to above freezing. Night temperatures may fall well below zero. Annual snowfall averages nearly 150 inches in most of the park, except in the northern range. At higher elevations, 200–400 inches of snow have been recorded. **All roads and entrances, with one exception, are closed to motor vehicle travel. Some may be groomed for over-snow vehicles. The north entrance road from Gardiner to Cooke City, MT, is open to wheeled vehicles and may close due to storms. Snow tires are recommended, and often required. You must return to the north entrance to leave the park.**

# Yellowstone Trip Planner

UNITED STATES  
DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR  
National Park Service  
P.O. Box 168  
Yellowstone National Park  
Wyoming 82190

Official Business  
Penalty for Private Use: \$300



PRSRT STD  
U.S. Postage Paid  
Yellowstone National Park, WY  
Permit G-83

*Revised November 2011*